

THREE COUNT[®]

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A WCW BLAST! Steamboat tops Rude; Sting Pins Wild C.J.

By Jeff Cohen

Special to Three Count

World Championship Wrestling held Beach Blast, its second pay-per-view show under new vice president in charge of wrestling Bill Watts, on June 20 from Mobile, Ala. The show is being given a positive review by almost all who have seen it, and it is hard for me to disagree. Results:

- As per the theme of the pay-per-view, all the announcers wore beach attire. There were no mats at ringside, which caused a few problems in a couple of matches. Additionally, ring announcer Gary Michael Cappetta was not present. Instead, Tony Gillam was doing the ring calls. Tony Schiavone and Eric Bischoff opened the show and introduced Watts, who outlined his plans to keep WCW exciting. He referred back to the UWF "junior heavyweights," and said he hoped these light heavyweights would be just as thrilling. Then it was time for Jesse Ventura's entrance. He was sunbathing and led to ringside by four bathing suit models. Who needs Missy and what's her name?

1) **Scotty Flamingo** pins **Brian Pillman** in 17:29 to win the prestigious WCW light heavyweight title. This was the first of several matches where wrestlers got around the "no brawling at ringside" rule by fighting onto the ramp leading to the ring. Pillman's win-some, lose-some record continues. He totally carried Scott, who did a clumsy fall through the ropes, keeping one eye on the cement floor at all times. This also prevented Brian from doing a dive, considering his loused up back, and Scott's attempt was screwed up as well. No top rope moves, of course. Bummer. Gillam was doing five-minute time calls, and gave the first at the 3:40 mark. **Grade: C+.**

- It was now time for the first segment in the bikini contest. **Johnny B. Badd** was introduced on the back set, which is something the World Wrestling Federation could consider on its big shows to help with skits and angles. After saying both of his trademark phrases ("I'm

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Steiner Loses to Williams at Clash

By ALEX MARVEZ

Three Count Editor

Steve Williams and Terry Gordy eliminated Rick and Scott Steiner from the National Wrestling Alliance tournament in an impromptu match on World Championship Wrestling's Clash of Champions June 22 on TBS.

The show, taped June 16 in Charleston, S.C., was totally dedicated to the tournament, which concludes July 12 on WCW's Great American Bash pay-per-view show. The seedins were shown throughout the evening to the fans. And for one night only, WCW vice president of wrestling **Bill Watts** allowed wrestlers to jump off the top rope without risking a disqualification. He also allowed one mat to be placed on one side of the ring. **Missy Hyatt, Terry Allen, Tony Schiavone** and **Eric Bischoff** served as hosts, and **Jim Ross** and **Jesse Ventura** handled the play-by-play. Results:

1) **Nikita Koloff-Ricky Steamboat** defeated **Joe and Dean Malenko** when Koloff pinned Dean with the Lithuanian sickle. Let me begin by stating I am extremely prejudiced toward the Malenkos. I think they are great wrestlers, great people, a great tag-team, and would get over in this country if used correctly. However, they did nothing to help themselves in this match. Joe looked sluggish and about 10-15 pounds overweight, which is highly unusual for such a hard trainer as him. But it might be understandable because Joe works full-time as a pharmacist, and only wrestles several times a year now for **Yoshiaki Fujiwara's** Pro Wrestling Fujiwara shoot-fighting group. Dean looked sharper, which is understandable because he is working regularly for **Giant Baba's** All Japan Pro Wrestling. However, their charisma during this match was negligible, which is their only real weak point. Of course, Koloff didn't do a great job of carrying the action, either. The action with Steamboat was very good, as expected, but this match did not flow smoothly. **Grade: C.**

2) **Steve Austin-Rick Rude** (accompanied by **Madusa**) defeated **Tom Zenk-Marcus Alexander Bagwell** when Rude pinned Bagwell after the Rude

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Why ask Why?

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sopretty," and "I'm a ~~zazz~~ man"), Johnny explained there would be three separate heats (ahem) before the winner was announced -- evening gowns, bathing suits and itsy-bitsy bikinis. Missy Hyatt came out in a nice dress. Grade: B. She went back into her cabana, and Madusa came out of the other cabana in a wedding dress (her real one?). Grade: B-. Johnny sounded way too excited.

2) Ron Simmons pins Taylor Made Jobber in 7:09 with a crisp powerslam, the highlight of the match. Weren't people saying that with Watts in charge Terry Taylor would get a push? Maybe they meant that extra push off the diff. Nothing special, no heat, a match right off the syndicated show. The show was starting to go downhill. Grade: D. After the match, Jim Ross interviewed Simmons, who said he would continue his quest to be the first black heavyweight champion. The crowd popped somewhat.

3) Greg Valentine defeated Marcus Alexander Bagwell by figure-four submission in 7:16. Mark sold an injured leg, but essentially, it was the second "dean" victory by a heel on the show. Greg was especially up for the match and had his working boots on. Sadly, no one cared. The Hammer has now wrestled his two finest back-to-back PPV matches since 1985. Squashes to Dustin Rhodes will follow for the next three months. Grade: D.

4) Sting pinned Cactus Jack on the ramp after a clothesline off the top turnbuckle in 11:23. This was not a "falls out anywhere on the Gulf Coast" match, but rather an old-fashioned "explosion match," with minor brawling into the crowd. After teasing a fight outside the building on all the promos for so many weeks, the furthest the battling tandem got was over the guard rail and into the crowd for about 45 seconds before Jack took yet another insane bump. Otherwise, how could anyone be disappointed by Cactus, the human bump machine. As one observer at my house noted, "He'll kill himself." Forgetting about having no mats beneath him, Jack did his off-the-ring-apron sunset flip to the concrete on Sting, ala the Jack-Eddie Gilbert match in Philadelphia. Good heat, considering the crowd missed some of the action, as no giant screens were apparent in the arena. Grade: A+. This was a non-title match, I guess to make people think Sting might actually lose. This was

probably the only way to add any suspense, as it's too bad Jack has never won a match on pay-per-view.

5) Rick Steamboat defeated Rick Rude in the 30-minute Iron Man Challenge. What was announced in all publicity as a title match turned out to be non-title. Gillam told the audience Paul E. Dangerously was barred from ringside. Why? Why was that not previously advertised? Why ask why? Rude pinned Steamboat holding the tights at 22:15 (counting down from 30). He performed the Rude Awakening at 21:21 for a 2-0 advantage. Less than a minute later, Rude came off the top rope at 20:17 and the referee disqualified him, cutting the lead to 2-1. But the effort allowed Rude to pin Steamboat again with a small package at 19:50. Then it was off to the mat work and rest holds, with abdominal stretches, facelocks, etc., until Steamboat reversed a piledriver for a pinfall at 12:20, making it 3-2. After a backslide, Ricky evened the score at 9:36. Then came a two-

Sheet Spotlight

Here's a look at the top stories of some of the other wrestling newsletters, with subscription information:

• **Dave Meltzer's Wrestling Observer Newsletter** (June 22): Analysis of how Bill Watts must change WCW's perception; News that Brian Blair is wrestling for New Japan negotiating a deal for Hulk Hogan; Update on Puerto Rican news; Word of Ric Flair-Mr. Perfect split-tease on WWF European telecasts. *Weekly*; \$1.50 an issue. P.O. Box 1228, Campbell CA 95009-1228.

• **Ron Lemieux's Arena Report** (June 1): My favorite issue thus far because of Scott Hudson's hilarious "Jacksonville Catch Phrase Reference Guide" (highlighted by No. 5); K.C. O'Connor's excellent editorial about why WCW should work with Smokey Mountain Wrestling; Live ICWA report from Tampa. (June 15): Ron's editorial on the Steiner brothers and live match report from ICWA show in Tampa; Updated Florida news. *Bi-weekly*; \$1 an issue. P.O. Box 952547, Lake Mary, FL 32795-2547.

• **Jeff Mullins' Pro Wrestling Sushi** (June 1992; double issue): Well-deserving criticism of top newsletter writers for not pursuing reasons for the Eddie Gilbert-Madusa divorce; Not-so-well-placed parody of Dave Meltzer raising newsletter rates under the "All kidding aside" section; Wonderful map of the Portland Sports Arena, and other demented humor-type pieces. *Monthly*; \$1.50 an issue. P.O. Box 36189, San Jose, CA 95158.

• **Steve Boucher's Figure Four** (Issue 3): Interesting (yet short) interview with **Killer Kowalski**; Excellent review of the sizzling Universal Championship Wrestling scene in New Hampshire; Mid-year awards for WCW and WWF. Has good potential. *Bi-monthly*; \$1.50 an issue. 37 Middlesex Rd., Merrimack, NH 03054.

THREE COUNT®

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minute resthold until Steamboat scored a pin with :35 remaining. They put on a demonstration of every fast pinfall and kickout you've seen to make up for the two dead minutes, but the bell sounded and Steamboat's arm was raised in triumph. The crowd popped, assuming as we all did that he was now U.S. champion. Nope. **Grade:** A. It would have been higher if the non-title stipulation had been announced earlier. Decent booking of the falls, although Steamboat winning an early fall and then coming back would have been just as good and put some early heat on Rude to try and come back.

- Remember the ladies? Time after two phenomenal matches to go to the bathing suits. What should have come between the two main events was held now, with Madusa coming out in the same black and mesh suit she wore a few weeks back on *WCW Saturday Night*. She wore a cap and jacket (which she actually looked cuter in than the swimsuit). Madusa looked mighty pissed when the camera crept behind her on the ramp to get a butt shot, and she tried to cover her ass with the jacket. No dice. **Grade:** A-. Missy was next, in a blue bikini. Are they now going to try to re-sell her as a heel once the crowd was cheering for her? She turns more than a chicken on a rotisserie spit. **Grade:** A.

6) **Dustin Rhodes-Nikita Koloff-Barry Windham** defeated **Arn Anderson-Bobby Eaton-Steve Austin** via disqualification in 15:31. Paul E. came to the ring with the Dangerous Alliance. Very little heat for this one, probably because it's been on TBS in every combination since January. Either they need a new team member or a new set of opponents. Special referee **Ole Anderson** kept the D.A. in line. I kept waiting for heat between him and "cousin" Arn, but no such luck. After Arn was DQ'd for coming off the top rope, all six brawled briefly onto the ramp. Snore. Solid, but after all these months, nothing special. **Grade:** B-.

- Bishoff interviewed Steamboat, who declared himself the Iron Man, ready to win the U.S. title from Rude. Dangerously interrupted, said there would be no more title shots, and Cactus Jack came out to attack Steamboat, confusing the crowd. Why didn't this happen directly after his match? Why didn't the Rude-Steamboat match end the show, with the Steamboat-Jack brawl running over the sign-off credits to make people want to watch next week's telecasts? Why ask why, indeed.

- Now it was time to finish off the bikinis with the much-promised itsy-bitsies. Video recorders across America, not even recording the rest of the show, are geared and primed. Tapetraders across the country (and in Japan) prepare for ecstasy. Jesse joins Johnny for the final. He is wearing, please note, two black bandanas, one on his head and one around his neck (FORESHADOWING). Madusa comes out in a red, white and blue mini and white leggings. My friends almost jumped the

TV set. Tongues are wagging. Madusa walks up the ramp and gives a contemptuous look to the camera. If the second ex-Mrs. Gilbert has an ounce of fat on her, I couldn't see it. Now, it's Missy's turn. But wait -- someone has stolen her bathing suit! Quickly, she grabs Jesse's bandanas, and Johnny goes into her cabana to see if she's able to come out. Missy emerges, wearing the bandanas as a suit. The bathing suit is, in fact, less revealing than the little blue number she wore out earlier. Nonetheless, Johnny asks the crowd which they like better and they cheer Missy. Now Madusa, who for some reason did not go back to her cabana, pushes Johnny into hers. He comes out holding -- gasp -- her bikini top! Jesse pushes him back inside, and Johnny sticks his head out and declares that Madusa is "definitely the first lady of WCW." Johnny looks at the camera dopily and Ross plugs the 900 number. No winner is announced. No point to the skit is revealed.

7) **Scott and Rick Steiner** fight **Terry Gordy-Steve Williams** to a 30-minute draw in a 28:24 match. Why do this after having a legit 30-minute match, complete with a running clock earlier in the show? Why ask ... oh, never mind. No shooting in this match. Lots of matwork since they were doing a Broadway. Lots of collegiate amateur moves. Lots of slaps (since outlawed, but what the hey?). For the first 10 minutes, very little selling on anybody's part, but the pace picked up. The crowd did not really know Gordy and Williams, which is primarily Dusty's fault, as there are dozens of nifty Japanese matches they could have requested, as well as loads of Williams stuff with Rick that could have served as a pre-match angle. Scott hit the Frankensteiner on Gordy with two seconds remaining, but the bell rang. The Steiners then kicked the Jap lovers out of the ring as the crowd applauded and got their coats. **Grade:** A-. This was the match to start the feud, so there couldn't be a blow-off. Ross plugged the NWA tag-team tournament at the Clash (telecast two days later), and alluded to a possible second-round match-up between the two teams.

- **Notes:** Either Rude vs. Steamboat or Sting vs. Cactus Jack should have closed this show. Clean finishes where the babyfaces go over instead of an indecisive draw. Does the Cowboy love the Steiners so much that he's putting them over in the main event on two straight shows (Blast and Clash)? ... Once again, interviews were sorely lacking. What the WWF does better than WCW are those pre- and post-match locker room interviews to get over the wrestlers as personalities. These WCW guys are the greatest collection of American talent. But except for the hard-cores, who knows anything about them ... The show had a live gate of \$28,000, which is horrible for a pay-per-view show. The preliminary pay-per-view buy-rate stands at an 0.4, which would be the lowest for a major WCW show in history.

Pillman-Lyger Fantastic at Clash

(Continued from Page 1)

awakening. Bagwell has improved considerably, but needs to work on his punches. They look similar to **Rick Steiner's**, which isn't a good thing. Austin and Rude were simply fantastic, with Rude not selling any punches to his abdomen. Finish came when Bagwell missed a dropkick. Grade: B-.

3) Williams-Gordy defeated **The O'Dea's** in a one-sided squash ending when Williams pinned **Larry O'Dea** with an Oklahoma Stampede. **Larry O'Dea**, one of seven members on the NWA's board of directors, may need to be replaced after sustaining a brutal belly-to-back suplex by Gordy. Gordy and Williams, who wore Japanese kimonos to the ring, looked physically great. I guess this match answers Paul Hanlin's question of what an O'Dea is. Grade: C-.

- Next came an interview with **Sting**, who was supposed to have sustained a life-threatening injury at the hands of **Big Van Vader** in April. I was sitting in Sports, an aptly-named sports bar in Manhattan, watching the show with the volume off. Somehow, I don't think I missed anything important.

4) **Barry Windham-Dustin Rhodes** defeated **Bobby Eaton-Arn Anderson** (accompanied by **Paul E. Dangerously**) in an outstanding give-and-take match. It was so hot in the unairconditioned arena that Dangerously took off his jacket almost at the on-set. The finish came when Anderson gave Rhodes a spine buster and then began brawling with Windham outside the ring. Eaton missed an elbow drop on Rhodes, and, while getting up, was bulldogged for the pin. Grade: B+.

5) **The Freebirds** defeated **The Silver Kings** in a miscarriage of justice. The outcome of this match is largely, I feel, because of Watts' new policy of trying to throw swerves at wrestling's insider media, which often knows match outcomes well-ahead of time. The Kings were scheduled to win, as they were already advertised on the back of the latest *WCW Magazine* as having had advanced to the Bash (the magazine came out prior to the Clash's air date). The Birds were totally outclassed, with horrible timing off the ring ropes to boot. Finish came when one Silver King attempted jumping from the top rope outside the ring onto **Michael Hayes**, who was being held by the other SK. Hayes moved, and the Kings collided. Hayes rolled the legal man back into the ring and applied a small package for the win. Where was **Precious**? Grade: D.

6) **Brian Pillman-Jushin Lyger** defeated **Chris Benoit-Biff Wellington** in one of the best matches held in the U.S. this year. Everyone in this match looked fantastic, with Lyger shining even though he used little of his repertoire. Some of the high spots: Pillman suplexing Wellington from inside the ring to the outside; Wellington dumping Lyger outside the ring but missing a splash over the top rope; Pillman giving Benoit a belly-to-back suplex off the top rope, following it with a top-rope dropkick and then a body press onto Benoit outside the ring from the ring apron; Lyger jumping off

the top rope onto Wellington on the floor, reversing Benoit's belly-to-back suplex attempt off the top rope and delivering a **Yoshihiro Asai** moonsault onto Benoit outside the ring, springing off the second rope from the ring apron, and moonsaulting backwards. Lyger pinned Wellington with a moonsault. Wow! In all honesty, this match wasn't as good as some I have seen these four wrestle in, but it was refreshing to see this type of action in WCW. Grade: A.

7) **Hiroshi Hase-Akira Nogami** defeated **The Job Hunters (Bob Cook and Joe Cazana** teaming under hoods to take the place of the real **Head Hunters**). This match wasn't as good as it could have been, considering Cook is a very good worker. The heels had a lot more of the offense than usual, with Cook and Cazana showing off some of the double-team maneuvers they have been practicing at **Jody Hamilton's** wrestling school. The finish was a double pin, with Nogami pinning one Hunter with a German suplex and Hase pinning the other with a Northern Lights suplex. Grade: C.

- Next came an interview with **Ron Simmons**, which was interrupted by **Harley Race**. Race and **The Super Invader** then brawled with Simmons, ending with Simmons cleaning house. In one minute, Race took more bumps than the Invader (**Ray "Hercules" Hernandez**) will take all year.

8) Williams-Gordy defeated **Los Hermanos Steiners** in a major surprise. The Steiners were set to face the Puerto Rican entry of **Miguelito Perez and Ricky "El Boriqua" Santana**, but the latter two were asked by WCW to stay home. However, it was explained on television that Perez-Boriqua had been injured. Anyway, Williams and Gordy took their place, and the match was very good. It began slowly, but had the feel of a legitimate wrestling match, with lots of submission maneuvers and mat work. At the finish, Rick powerslammed Williams, but the pin was not counted because Scott was the legal man. Williams shoulder-blocked Scott, who began selling a knee injury. Williams did a fantastic full-press-into-power-slam maneuver, but Scott kicked out. Scott went for a belly-to-back suplex on Williams, but Gordy clipped his knee from behind, leading to Scott collapsing and being pinned. The show ended with Scott being rolled attended to in the ring by 1,276 wrestlers and referees. Grade: B+.

Notes: The show drew an abysmal 2.8 rating, the lowest in Clash history, but out drew the WWF's Prime Time Wrestling, which only had a 1.6... Watts did several interviews during the show, and announced the NWA president resigned over the Williams-Gordy vs. Steiners situation... Overall, I give the show a seven on a 10-point scale. The positives were three outstanding tag-team matches and talented international wrestlers appearing in the U.S. The negative was the poor booking that left some of the foreign talent with inferior opposition... Dangerously appeared on eight radio stations in Charleston the day of the show, hyping the event.

Letters

Watts Last Hope for WCW

Dear Alex,

School's out for me for the summer and I'm very happy. I had a few questions to ask: 1) Will **Lex Luger** be a heel when he wrestles in the WWF?; 2) Will **Bret Hart** ever team with his brother, Owen?; 3) When will **Hulk Hogan** come back?; 4) Will the **Legion of Doom** stay babyfaces for a long time?; 5) Do you think **Sensational Sherri** will ever turn good?; 6) Do you know if **Dave Meltzer** has come out with his new wrestling yearbook?

-- Joseph Sena
Tallahassee, FL

AM: I figure Luger will enter the WWF as a heel upon debuting in March. However, if I were the WWF, I would try to turn Luger's motorcycle accident into a positive. Show him working out every few weeks, struggling to walk, etc. Show a modest side of Luger (yes, I'm sure there is one somewhere). Bring him in as a babyface. Anyway, I figure that if both Hart's stay in the WWF for a while, and with Bret apparently content, I figure it's a safe bet, I would not be surprised if they are someday teamed together. Hogan will likely return around January in some form to gear toward a comeback match at **Wrestlemania IX**. If the WWF was smart, they would save his re-introduction for a prime-time network special. I figure an L.O.D. turn is imminent before **WM IX**. Sherri may turn good someday, but I don't quite picture her quite as effective as **The Lovely Elizabeth** in the role of a demure female. Meltzer did not publish a 1991 yearbook, and I think there is a 50-50 chance he will produce a 10-year anniversary yearbook this winter.

Dear Alex,

The return of **Bill Watts** to mainstream wrestling may be World Championship Wrestling's last chance to stay in the mainstream, but it has given hope to the company's future. Although a lot of their recent influx of talent are World Wrestling Federation old-timers, I always enjoyed **Greg Valentine**, **Hercules** and (soon to be?) **Jake Roberts**, even though their recent WWF pushes were lacking excitement. They may have been second-tier in the WWF, but they can easily be top contenders in WCW, as are **Rick Rude** and **Ricky Steamboat**. The **Super Invader** martial arts gimmick for **Hercules** is too weird, though. Does Watts really believe a return to bloody matches will help improve WWF attendance?

I agree that WCW has too many pay-per-view events, especially for what they do with them. If they had better match-making for these special events, I'd want more of them. There should be at least two of the major titles on the line on each PPV, unless the main event is to decide the title. I think it's a bad gimmick having the world champion not defending his title in a "falls count anywhere on the Gulf Coast" match, as it detracts from the fans live in the arena.

As with the WWF and their recent shift toward more title matches on PPV shows, I have always thought PPV shows should be promoted with events leading up to where some finality would

Reader results

Lane falls victim to Mulkey-mania

Danny Parris of Spartanburg, S.C., attended a National Championship Wrestling card June 13 at the National Guard Armory in Inman, S.C., before 120 fans. Results (graded on the five-stars scale): 1) **Mitch Pruitt** defeated **Dr. X** (**Mike Somaini**) via disqualification in 10:43 (*); 2) **Jeff Hamnick** d. **Billy Eagle** in 11:33 (**); 3) "Stray Cat" **Brody Chase-Mike Hart** d. **Butcher Blackwell-Rattlesnake Westbrook** in 17:01. Chase and Hart will now face NCW tag-team champs **Wahoo McDaniel** and **Jay Eagle** June 25 in Spartanburg. Blackwell and Westbrook brawled after the match (* 1/2); 4) **Jay Eagle** d. **Chris Landell** in 14:47 (** 1/2); 5) **Bambi** d. **Peggy Lee Leather** in 11:36 (Dud; Samesh-t, different card); 6) **McDaniel** d. **Russian Assassin** (**Hunter Thompson**) in 7:52 of an Indian strap match. Wahoo juiced heavily. Chase and Hart turned heel after the match by attacking **McDaniel**. **Jay Eagle** made the save (**); 7) **Bambi** won a blindfold battle royal in 15:16. Everyone participated except **McDaniel** (*).

• Parris also attended a Pro Wrestling Association television taping May 14 in Belton, S.C. before 205 fans. The group's telecasts air on Telecable in Anderson, S.C. Results: 1) **David Morton** (a **Ricky Morton** clone) d. **Snake Pitts** in 6:14 (Dud); 2) **The Bounty Hunter** d. **Ricky Blue** in 6:56 (1/2 *); 3) **Mr. Wrestling** (**Somaini**) d. **Purple Passion** in 8:22 (*); 4) **Grizzly Boone** (**Joey Lovinggood**) d. "Kimala" (not **James Harris** or **Ben Peacock**) in 10:48 (* 1/2); 4) **Jay Eagle** d. **The Hitman** (**Thompson**) in an Indian strap bout in 10:39 (* 1/2); 5) **Bambi** lost the U.S. ladies belt to **Peggy Lee Leather** in 13:38 (**). Shocking to see **Leather** win; 5) **Chase-Hart** d. **Blackwell-Hells Angel Cruiser** in 17:07 (* 1/2). Hart hit **Blackwell** in the face with a cake; 6) **Bill Mulkey** defeated **Stan Lane** in 12:04. Lane used the ropes to gain a pinfall, but **Mulkey** finked to the referee and got the match restarted. Then the pinfall occurred. Whomever decided to put **Mulkey** over Lane should be whipped 1,000 times with a leather belt. (Dud).

occur. Tournaments with finals on PPV are good, as are major feuds that have gone on for a couple of months ending with DQs or countouts. The WWF was usually good at this, especially in matches involving Hulk Hogan (until his Wrestlemania match with Sid Justice). You could usually count on a clean pinfall, not the old Ric Flair/Four Horsemen finishes of the NWA. Throw a little life and surprises into the promotions and have some of the favorites lose, if only for a few months until the next pay-per-view.

With Wrestle War's main event the War Games and Starrcade having Battle Bowl, WCW should include at least a world, U.S. or world tag-team title match. I also hope the WWF continues to add world title matches to Survivor Series and the Royal Rumble. It would not be a bad idea to alter the Survivor Series format somewhat and include fewer "team" matches and add other matches, including some title bouts. While one or two of the team matches are great, the other lineups have been mediocre, and the concept has become stale in recent years.

I agree it is a bad policy to sign wrestlers to guaranteed contracts or allow them to dictate their own match outcome. Take the Steiners for example. Wouldn't it be much better for the heat in their matches if they would lose once in a while or get jumped and really trashed, only to come back stronger and more popular?

Has WCW ended Sting's feud with Big Van Vader? He wrestled Cactus Jack on the latest PPV, and is scheduled against Arn Anderson next, with little mention of any return bouts with Vader. I thought this could have been a well-promoted feud, especially considering Vader put Sting out of action for a while. Why has Vader been absent from WCW PPVs? He is the

group's most awesome force (literally). Does his Japan schedule conflict? This has been a major problem with WCW in that some of their feuds have collapsed, been delayed or forgotten because of someone's journey to Japan in the midst of a feud.

Where is Roddy Piper and Piper's Pit? What is Roberts' status? And, I can't say it enough. Papa Shongo's gimmick keeps getting better. Anyone who can make The Warrior puke is OK in my book. He's been doing it to us for too long.

-- Steven Smith
North Miami Beach, Fla.

AM: I agree whole-heartedly that Sting's feud with Vader has been botched. Who can believe Sting has a life-threatening injury not only three months after it happened, but after Sting basically dismissed his cracked rib as minor? WCW should have discussed Vader's Japanese plans with him and New Japan to figure out a plan for his PPV appearances. If not a live appearance, maybe a taped match from Tokyo could have been shown. Or a taped interview. Or a match shown that was already taped, but "simulcast" from Japan, especially against a well-known foe who would do a job, like The Great Muta. Vader has somehow gotten over fairly well with the casual WCW fan (yes, there are still a few), but there is little incentive to purchase the Bash PPV to see him wrestle Sting. I assume Piper has merely taken one of his usual hiatuses from the ring (happens every time he misses his family or gets tired of wrestling). Last word I have is that Roberts is not coming in, although I think you have to wait until August to truly evaluate what Watts is going to do talent-wise.

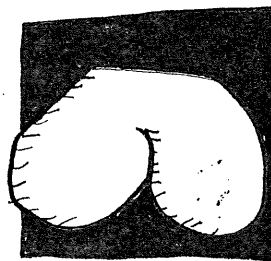
Bill Kunkel's Pot Shots

WHEN JIM ROSS APPEARED ON "WRESTLETALK", THE LAS VEGAS-BASED RADIO SHOW, HE MADE A FINAL REQUEST: "BILL... IN YOUR FUTURE CARTOONS [COULD YOU] TAKE A LITTLE OFF THE CHEEKS?"

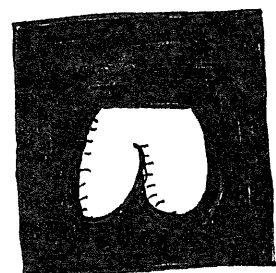
KAY, JIMBO, HOW DO YOU LIKE YOUR "NEW LOOK"??



Potshot
Lance Waters



OLD CHEEKS



NEW CHEEKS!

Poor Clash Ruins Blast Momentum

Fan-damn-tastid

Beach Blast was, without a doubt, the best pay-per-view card of the year. Aside from the **Madusa/Missy Hyatt** mess (and didn't the first lady of wrestling -- no, not you, Ms. Hyatt -- look like she wanted to shoot-kick, **Akira Maeda**-style, anyone within the vicinity as that idiocy dragged on?), World Championship Wrestling finally got it together. Despite poor ticket sales and lighting befitting a **Herb Abrams** pay-per-view,

Paul Hanlin Jr.

Beach Blast was a blast, first class. I take that back, Herb... wouldn't want to be sued.

I dare you to find one match, even **Greg Valentine** vs. **Marcus Bagwell**, that wasn't 2 1/2 stars, which that was. No other match was under three stars, and there were four four-star matches.

Despite coming on the heels of the latest **Evander Holyfield** snoozer boxing match the night before, I saw wrestling the likes of which not seen by these cynical eyes since 1986, since the days of ... well, the Universal Wrestling Federation. Under the stewardship of one **Bill Watts**.

Imagine a heel winning cleanly in a title match? Shame on anyone who calls **Scotty Flamingo** a nobody now. He held up his end of things and then some. **Terry Taylor** vs. **Ron Simmons** was a very competitive match, although I could do without those football tackles. Three stars, easy. Bagwell-Valentine is duly noted. **Sting** and **Cactus Jack** tore the house down and nearly blew the lid off the match-ratings scale. Four and a half stars. Can you imagine if Cactus' son, in 20 or 30 years, gets into the business and history repeats itself? That's something to ponder.

Ricky Steamboat and **Rick Rude** had to follow that, and follow it they did. I hadn't a clue as to whether or not this was a title match until the bell rang, but they held nothing back. Another four-star affair. **The Dangerous Alliance** vs. **Nikita Koloff-Barry Windham**-**Dustin Rhodes** hovered near four stars, with the finish propelling it there. One question -- Shouldn't Nikita's finisher be called the Commonwealth of Independent States sickle?

What a difference a pay-per-view makes ...

Did ya' get a gander at **Terry Gordy's** and **Steve**

Williams' headbands as they headed forthering? Could they have possibly said in Japanese, "Think again, Steiners?" Rick and Scott certainly were on their best behavior, weren't they? It was the fourth four-star match in a row, and perhaps the guys from the Midwest with the all-natural physiques were kinder and gentler on their new foes. Gordy looked the best I've seen in many a moon. Since I've been schooled in the shooting style, I enjoyed the mat stuff.

This was a Father's Eve present to my dad, who gave the card a nine on a 10-point scale. I've always wondered if the money I put out for a PPV is worth it. This time, I had no doubts.

But as good as Beach Blast was, that's how mediocre Clash of Champions was 48 hours later.

In the process of Alex moving from Florida to New York, I sent him my column that appeared in Issue 37-38, which included my picks, if I had the book, as to how the National Wrestling Alliance tag-team tournament would be handled. Since there aren't exactly a wealth of tag-teams in WCW, I would have put all of the "outside" teams over save for **The Headhunters**, throw in a turn on **Jushin Lyger** by **Brian Pillman**, an upset win by **The Malenko's**, which would free Steamboat and Nikita to wrestle Cactus Jack and Rude respectively on July 12 at the Great American Bash PPV, have both Dangerous Alliance tag-teams win and face each other in the second round, among other things.

So what happens?

A paint-by-numbers first round, as all the outside teams were nothing but "jobbers for the stars." A woeful collection of matches, saved by the junior heavy-weights in a four-star match, with one great aerial move after another. The greatest miscarriages of justice were the Steamboat-Koloff and Freebird wins. Doesn't that stretch the imagination, a guy who knows about a half-dozen moves pins one of the best pure wrestlers around.

And about that final impromptu match ...

I saw major kay fabing as the "damaged" knee of **Scott Steiner**, who was pinned by Williams (heaven forbid, the gentlemen from Michigan do a clean job), at the Clash, taped on June 16, miraculously healed in four days for Beach Blast with no mention of the injury during the final match on that PPV, which was a little better than this one.

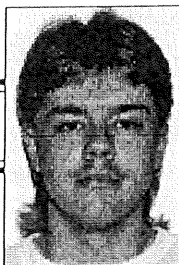
(Continued on Page 10)

*Paul would appreciate any comments, objections or biting criticisms to his weekly column. Send letters, etc. to **Three Count** at 5283 Glenlock St., Philadelphia, PA 19124.*

Tenryu Jump Helped AJPW Shine

On rare occasions, *Musings From Japan* will take a special, in-depth look into a promotion in Japan. This is designed to give those of you who don't follow the Japanese scene closely (shame on you) a glance at the main-event wrestlers of a particular promotion. We'll start with All-Japan Pro Wrestling, which is the hottest promotion going today. Ranked are the group's Top 10 wrestlers, based on status and not workrate.

John Muse



1) Shohei "Giant" Baba (6-8, 270): Baba, 53 and a 32-year pro, is a legend in Japanese wrestling. Before becoming a wrestler, Baba was a pitcher in the farm system of the Yomiuri Giants. Baba broke into wrestling in April 1960 after being discovered by Rikidozan, the most legendary wrestler in. Baba was a three-time National Wrestling Alliance champion, defeating Jack Brisco and Harley Race (twice). Baba's reigns usually lasted close to a week before the American would win the title back and return to the United States. Baba has wrestled sporadically since 1984, and most of his bouts today come in tag-team format. Baba is regarded as a comedy wrestler because his dreaded "Baba chops" are laughable, but don't mistake the fans laughter as a sign they don't love and respect him.

Baba will go down as one of the greatest promoters/bookers of all time. All Japan has become a highly successful promotion despite potential disasters. One of them came when Genichiro Tenryu jumped to Super World Sports in April 1990. Baba guided the promotion through the loss and to even greater heights by pushing the younger stars and giving a Tenryu-like push to Mitsuahara Misawa. All Japan is still hot two years after Tenryu's departure, while the SWS is in shambles. Baba has been voted Best Booker the past three years and Best Promoter the past two in the *Wrestling Observer Newsletter's* year-end readers poll.

2) Stan Hansen (6-2 1/2, 285): Hansen, 42, is the top foreign wrestler in Japan and one of the country's biggest drawing cards. Stan is the current Triple Crown champion, but his biggest success has come in the tag-team ranks. During his 19-year career, Hansen has held tag-team titles with partners like Ted DiBiase, Terry Gordy, Tenryu, Dan Spivey and Bruiser Brody. The

Brody-Hansen combination was one of the all-time greatest, and matches against the Funk brothers (Terry and Dory) are still remembered vividly by Japanese fans. Is currently cast in the role of the veteran performer trying to fight back the challenges of younger contenders. Hansen's workrate has drastically improved recently in this role.

3) Jumbo Tsuruta (6-4, 275): Tsuruta represented Japan in the 1972 Olympics in Munich in freestyle wrestling, but was eliminated in the first round. He began training for a professional career shortly thereafter under the tutelage of Dory Funk Jr. Jumbo has held almost every major All Japan title, and held the American Wrestling Alliance title briefly in 1984. By the late 1980s, many people thought Jumbo's career was winding down. Tenryu's defection changed that assumption, and Tsuruta picked up his work to heights he had never reached before. Tsuruta proved his worth to Baba and is well on his way to legendary status.

4) Mitsuahara Misawa (5-11, 230): Misawa is another wrestler to benefit from Tenryu's jump. After earning honors as a national high school champion in 1980 as a 187-pound amateur wrestler, Misawa entered the pro ranks in 1981. He wrestled as the second Tiger Mask from 1984 to 1990. His career has sustained minor setbacks in the form of elbow and knee injuries. A serious knee injury occurred in 1989, forcing Misawa to miss more than eight months of action. After Tenryu left, Baba picked Misawa to fill the void. Misawa removed his mask in dramatic fashion in May 1990, showing the fans he was "his own man," and defeated Tsuruta a month later to become the new star in All Japan. Barring any serious injuries, Misawa will fill the void when Tsuruta retires.

5) Terry Gordy (6-4, 290): "Bam Bam" began wrestling at the age of 14 in 1976, and skyrocketed to popularity in this country as part of The Fabulous Freebirds. But Gordy's wrestling prowess soon overshadowed that of partners Buddy Roberts and Michael Hayes. Gordy teamed with Hansen against the Funk's on August 31, 1983, in Terry Funk's first retirement match. Gordy and Hansen were extremely successful the following years, holding All Japan's world tag-team titles. Gordy has also held the Triple Crown on two occasions. The main criticism leveled against Bam Bam was the Freebird life-style he maintained even after splitting from the group for good in 1988. After a drug-induced heart-attack scare in July 1990, Gordy cleaned up his act and is now in the best shape of his career.

Gordy and partner **Steve Williams** recently lost their AJPW titles to **Tsuruta** and **Akira Taue**.

6) **Steve Williams** (6-1, 285): Williams, a 10-year pro, began his Japanese career with rival group New Japan Pro Wrestling. "Dr. Death" became the first wrestler to cross from a major promotion to another in February 1990 in a rare talent exchange between Baba and NJPW official **Seiji Sakaguchi** (Editor's note: NJPW was allowed to use **Tiger Jeet Singh** in exchange for releasing Williams. And as awful as Singh is, he made the company money through singles matches with **Hiroshi Hase**, **Riki Choshu** and **Antonio Inoki**, and also a tag-team partnership with Inoki). Williams, 33, has flourished in All Japan, winning the group's annual tag-team tournament with Gordy the past two years.

7) **Toshiaki Kawada** (5-9 1/2, 235): My personal favorite, the 28-year-old Kawada is currently regarded by some as the best male worker in wrestling. Kawada placed first at the high school championships at 165 pounds in 1981. Kawada, a 10-year pro, first came to prominence as part of the great **Footloose** tag-team with **Samson Fuyuki**. Fuyuki and Kawada traded the All-Asian tag-team titles frequently in 1989 with **Dan Krofatt** and **Doug Furnas** in many thrilling matches. After Fuyuki and Tenryu (the Footloose's long-time six-man tag-team partner) jumped to the SWS, Kawada teamed with Misawa, and eventually the duo won the AJPW tag-team titles. Kawada is rising, and one day, Misawa and Kawada will be the dream match, just like Tsuruta vs. Tenryu was.

8) **Kenta Kobashi** (6-1 1/2, 240): Terry Funk praised this 24-year-old after seeing his dedication and love of the sport. Kobashi shows the poise and ability of a veteran, despite a mere four years in the ring. He holds the All-Asian tag-team titles with **Toyushi Kikuchi**, and has held the belts previously with **Tiger Mask** (Misawa) and **Johnny Ace**. Barring injuries, he is the future of AJPW.

9) **Masanobu Fuchi** (5-10, 220): Fuchi, 37, is best remembered by American fans as the partner of current Frontier Martial Arts wrestling star **Atsushi Onita** during their stay in Memphis. The duo was part of the second Tupelo concession stand brawl in 1981. Fuchi, an 18-year veteran, is a great worker -- called the best in the world by AJPW regular **Dean Malenko** -- but is often underrated because he lacks charisma. Fuchi has held the group's junior heavyweight title for most of the past three years, and teams with Tsuruta usually when working as a heavyweight.

10) **Akira Taue** (6-3, 240): Taue, 30, is currently co-holder of the AJPW world tag-team titles with Tsuruta. Taue is also involved in a sometimes bloody feud with Kawada. Taue was a sumo wrestler before joining the pro ranks four years ago. While Taue still has a lot of improving to do, his association with Tsuruta is starting to pay-off in solid ring performances.

Briefly...

- The **Barbarian** and **Dick Slater** not only debuted as a tag-team June 25 in Kansas City, Kan., on a World Championship Wrestling television taping, but the duo won the U.S. tag-team championship from **The Freebirds** in less than five minutes. The match will air in late July. Also making his WCW debut was **Dan Spivey**, who will receive a mega-push as well.

- **Lex Luger** has already begun working out in his Atlanta gym only four days after being released from a Mobile, Ala., hospital following his motorcycling accident. Luger, who had three elbow operations and one arthroscopic knee scope performed by famed surgeon **Dr. James Andrews**, is expected to return to the ring next March.

- Admitted declining television ratings, both WCW and the World Wrestling Federation are facing substantial cuts in their syndicated television marketing this September. Several reports say the WWF will lose between 40-45 stations for its syndicated programming, which would be about 20-25 percent of the WWF's base.

- Another substantial loss came to **Hulk Hogan** when his sponsoring vitamin company declared bankruptcy. The product, which ranked fourth among children's vitamins last fall, has plummeted amidst allegations of cocaine and steroid abuse by Hogan.

- New deception by the WWF in regards to their Summer Slam pay-per-view show in England. The promotion is announcing a sell-out on its syndicated shows in Europe, however more than 20,000 tickets are still available at Wembley Stadium, according to **Mike Tenay** of the Wrestling Insiders radio show. The reason for the lie: The WWF wants to establish closed-circuit venues across Europe to view the show, and announcing a one-day sell-out is excellent publicity. Even with the absence of an immediate sell-out, the WWF should be thrilled with an advance sale of 60,000 tickets in six days for the 85,000-seat stadium.

- New matches announced for Summer Slam: **Crush** vs. **Repo Man**, **Beverly Brothers** vs. **The Natural Disasters** and **Tatanka** vs. **The Berserker**. Previously announced matches have **The British Bulldog** vs. **Bret Hart** for the Intercontinental title, **Randy Savage** vs. **The Ultimate Warrior** for the WWF title, **Ted Di Biase** vs. **Irwin R. Shyster** vs. **The Legion of Doom** for the WWF tag-team titles and **The Undertaker** vs. **Kimber**.

- **Three Count** has an interview planned with **Eddie Gilbert** to discuss the reasons why he and **Madusa** are getting (or have gotten) a divorce. *Pro Wrestling SUSHI* editor **Jeff Mullins** was on the mark when he said newsletter publishers have the responsibility to keep their readers informed on all issues, and this is certainly a news-worthy story.

- **Gordon Scozzari** sends word that his American Wrestling Federation will resume operations with shows in Rockland, NY, at the St. Jude-sponsored Rockland City Fair. "The 'real' reason for the long delay was the syndicator we were using," Scozzari wrote. "He cost us several deals by not sending out or marketing our tapes in a sufficient amount of time, meaning whenever we got an offer, he would take so long to provide the buyer with the tapes that they would grow disgruntled and back out of the deal. We finally seized the tapes from him, and have begun to see results." Scozzari says the AWF will use the following talent when it returns: **Sonny Beach**, **Paul Roma**, **The Pit Bulls**, England's **Giant Haystacks**, **Pez Whatley**, **Tony Atlas**, **The Power Twins**, **Mike Sharpe**, **Jimmy Snuka** and **Johnny Hot Body**.

- Speaking of **The Pit Bulls**, **Spike** (Gary Wolfe) broke his leg in a car accident June 10, and was unable to wrestle on a card he promoted under the Independent Pro Wrestling Association banner two days later at St. Joe's High School in Hammonton, N.J. Results of the show, held before 302 fans, saw **Johnny Rebel** draw **The Black Ninja**, **The Heavy Metal Maniac** d. **J.T. Smith**, **The Sandman** d. **Cry Baby Waldo**, **Larry Winters** d. **Steve Savage**, **John Rock** d. **Smith**, **The Pharaoh** d. **Glen Osborne** and **Pit Bull Rex** d. **Wild Samoan Samu** in the main event (originally scheduled as **Pit Bulls** vs. **Sika-Afa**).

- **Pit Bull Rex** (**Anthony Durante**) is wrestling overseas for **Catch Wrestling** from June 16 until December 3 as **Mad Bull Buster Rex**. Hopefully, **Spike** will be recovered by the time **Rex** returns, so they can reform their quickly improving tag-team.

- Listed No. 3 in the **IPWA** rankings are **The Bad Boys** (**Billy Brooks** and **Bret Blair**), long-time workers for **Eddy Mansfield's International Wrestling Federation**.

- **John Arezzi's** **Pro Wrestling Spotlight** radio show was not broadcast June 27 on **WEVD-AM** in New York City, and will not return until July 11. **Arezzi** says former business partner **Vince Russo** attempted to buy the time slot from **WEVD**, but was rebuffed. However, with **Arezzi** broadcasting sporadically and **Russo** gaining momentum with his **WWF** alliance, one has to wonder if a change is inevitable.

- **Dr. Mike Lano** of *Canvas Cavity* fame can take responsibility for being the first to report **Don Owen's** departure from Portland's **Big Time Wrestling** territory. The 80-year-old **Owen** reportedly told **Lano** he will take a two-year hiatus from promoting until the economy (i.e. logging) improves. "I'll probably be dead by then, so draw your own conclusions," **Owen** said.

- **Paul E. Dangerously** had some problems with **WCW** vice president of wrestling **Bill Watts** June 28 at a **WCW** show in Chicago. A spot in the match was called that reportedly **Watts** did not like, so he sent referee **Pee Wee Anderson** and road agent **Grizzly Smith** to send

Dangerously back to the dressing room at about the 23-minute mark of a **Barry Windham-Steve Austin** match. The problems were ironed out that night, said a **WCW** source. **WCW** drew only 1,200 fans in Chicago and a \$12,000 gate.

- Next **WCW Clash of Champions** scheduled for September 2 at Center Stage in Atlanta. If so, it will be the third change of venue for the card, and will likely kill the gate of any **Omni** shows during the month. No line-up has been announced.

- **WCW** is sending wrestlers to participate in the National Wrestling Alliance singles tournament to be held August 10-12 in Osaka. Some names I have heard are **Sting**, **Rick Rude**, **Steve Austin**, **Bobby Eaton** and **Arn Anderson**. For **WCW** fans in Florida, I wonder how these departures will affect the promotion's Aug. 13-15 dates in the Sunshine State?

- *The Wrestling Observer* Newsletter reports another new **Watts** fine -- \$250 if a babyface and heel travel on the same airplane together. It appears babyfaces and heels will have to alternate taking 6 a.m. flights from city-to-city to avoid the fine, which is sure a morale raiser.

- The angles for the **Warrior-Savage** match began June 29 at a **WWF** TV taping. During an interview with them, **Flair** and **Hennig** interrupted. **Savage** rushed to attack the duo, with the heels gaining the upper hand until **Warrior** made the save. **Savage** then yelled at **Warrior** for helping. Angle sound familiar?

Hanlin's View...

(Continued from Page 7)

Oh, by the way, those seedings published in the April 28 issue of **Three Count** on the left-hand side, the same line-up plugged for weeks on **WCW's** television shows -- throw that out. I guess it's **Pillman** and **Lyger** vs. **Koloff** and **Steamboat**, with the winner to face **Doc** and **Gordy**. What a mess.

The sole bright spot, besides the **Pillman-Lyger** match was the apparent reversal by **Watts** to send **WCW** guys to Tokyo for the triple-header in **Sumo Hall** from August 10-12 to crown an **NWA** singles champion. Will it be on **PPV**, perhaps?

The focus has to turn to the front office, specifically, the promotion of house shows, **Clashes** and **PPVs**. Was there a **PPV** so ineptly mishandled in the promotion of it as this one was? Or a **Clash** as mishandled both in its promotion and booking? We can only hope this booking fiasco was a one-time aberration.

Thanks, **WCW**, but no thanks. I'm skipping the **Bash** on **PPV**. You had a real chance to introduce a cadre of new people instead of the same guys, but you didn't. You stifled organizations that could have helped you out with talent exchanges. I think that's called burning your bridges.

Rogers, Soronaka Buried in Florida

Legendary wrestler **Nature Boy Buddy Rogers** died June 26 in a Fort Lauderdale hospital, four days after suffering two strokes that left him brain dead.

Rogers, 71, sustained a minor stroke June 22 in the bathroom of his Lauderdale-by-the-Sea home, and was taken to Fort Lauderdale's Holy Cross Hospital. Rogers appeared to be making a recovery, but suffered a second massive stroke later that afternoon that caused irreparable brain damage.

Alex Marvez



Rogers was the first wrestler to ever hold both the National Wrestling Alliance and World Wrestling Federation titles, serving as the first champion for the latter group in 1963. Rogers lost the title to **Bruno Sammartino** two years later in 48 seconds in one of the most controversial matches in wrestling history. Rogers said he had sustained a heart attack a few days before the match, and was in the hospital when promoter **Vince McMahon Sr.** asked him to return for the bout at Madison Square Garden. After much cajoling, Rogers agreed, but only if the match was kept brief. Some claim the match was a shoot, with Rogers refusing to lose the title beforehand.

Rogers underwent a heart bypass operation in the mid-1980s, but maintained a physique a 30-year-old would envy. Rogers was a stickler for physical fitness, swimming and lifting weights daily. The fact Rogers was in such good shape made it difficult for some to believe Rogers' could die so suddenly.

Rogers may have had some idea his physical condition was not good, according to his son, **David Rogers**. Rogers slipped in the supermarket a few weeks prior to his death and fractured his elbow. After that, Rogers dropped about 20 pounds, despite maintaining the same diet. David Rogers said his father collapsed before a doctor's appointment five days prior to the stroke. "We took him to the back waiting room in a wheel chair," David said. "After passing out, he suddenly woke up. Then he put his hands on his head and began crying like a baby. I knew something was wrong then."

Even though Rogers' speech began to slurs slightly and he lost partial sight in his left eye, a brain scan showed nothing was wrong, David Rogers said. Rogers also underwent an exam by a cardiologist later that week, and was dismissed with a clean bill of health.

Rogers, born **Herman Rhode**, grew up in

Camden, N.J. Rogers defined the role of a heel wrestler for decades to come with his arrogant strut and cocky persona, ala Rogers' protege, **Ric Flair**. Rogers was scheduled to return for a match last January against **Buddy Landell**, which would have made him the only wrestler besides **Lou Thesz** to have wrestled in seven decades. The match was cancelled, though, when Tri-State Wrestling Alliance declared bankruptcy.

Rogers was buried June 30 in Fort Lauderdale. Among those attending the ceremonies were **George Scott**, **Bob Roop**, **Dr. Red Roberts** and **Larry Sharpe**. A Lauderdale-by-the-Sea officer spoke at the eulogy about how Rogers manhandled a 29-year-old customer at a local restaurant who was harassing employees. Rogers was voted the city's Man of the Year for the action. **Bobby Rogers**, an 18-year-old protege of the Nature Boy, also spoke about how his dream was to train with Buddy, which he did. A giant poster of Rogers in his heyday, with Rogers holding a towel and the WWF title around his waist, was hung above the flowers sent by various individuals, including World Championship Wrestling.

• Another wrestling legend who recently passed away was **Masami Soronaka**, the referee and American booking agent for the Pro Wrestling Fujiwara shoot-fighting promotion. Soronaka, 48, died of a brain tumor less than a week after discovering it.

A source close to Soronaka said the former wrestler-turned-referee awoke on June 15 with no movement in his left arm. A hospital visit revealed Soronaka had a brain tumor. Soronaka, who began to feel poorly, underwent a biopsy for the tumor was held a few days later, with Soronaka hemorrhaging during the procedure. The tumor, the source said, was about 2/3 the size of his front lobe. Soronaka went into a coma and died June 13.

Yoshiaki Fujiwara, the PWF's founder, **Brady Boone**, **Jumbo Baretta**, **Karl Gotch** (Soronaka's son-in-law), **Ken Shamrock**, the Malenko family, **Penelope Paradise**, **Mark Starr** and **Bart Vail** attended Soronaka's funeral. He is survived by a 21-year-old son, 19-year-old daughter, two small children, and was expecting another child.

Ugi, a student at Larry Malenko's wrestling school in Tampa, is temporarily handling the travel arrangements of American talent to Japan. No word on who will book American talent for the group or train it.

"Masami was a great guy," said **Red Roberts**, who booked Soronaka as **V.C. Mihn** for the defunct Global Wrestling Alliance in 1988. "He was a positive, straight forward and direct person. He's one of the few guys in the wrestling business I can say that about."

Next issue: Wow, it sure feels good getting my newsletter out on time again. I had to rent a laser printer and send myself hurling into debt (thus, the different look the newsletter will have for the next five weeks), but it was worth it. The next issue will be mailed July 7, and will feature the return of Carlos Rey's lucha libre column, a preview of the Great American Bash, columns by Paul Hanlin and me, and a *Three Count* interview. We will have another issue mailed July 15 with a Bash report. Now, for my lube of the week, I want to thank Jeff Cohen for taking the reigns and analyzing WCW's Beach Blast pay-per-view show, John Muse for writing an extra column, Leni Sargent for two extremely funny photos of myself at WCW Super Brawl show last May, Bill Kunkel for his Pot Shot cartoon, Mike Tefay for having me on the Wrestling Insiders radio show, Alfonso Barreiro for his help in production and everyone else for their patience.

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